

# RIGATONI ALLA VODKA

*erves 4-6*

This rustic favorite is so simple to prepare yet so complex in flavor. Most recipes use heavy cream to soften the sauce, I prefer mascarpone cheese for a more dense and slightly sweeter version. I tend to go a little heavy on the red pepper flakes to keep it a little warm. You will love this dish, perfect for an easy weeknight dish or weekend dinner party.

**1 lb. Rigatoni**

**¼ cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil**

**1 onion, finely chopped**

**6 whole garlic cloves**

**½ cup tomato paste**

**1 cup tomato puree**

**1 teaspoon kosher salt**

**Crushed red pepper flakes to taste**

**½ cup vodka**

**½ cup mascarpone cheese**

**½ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated**

**Salt and pepper to taste**

**Torn fresh basil leaves (for serving)**

**Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (for serving)**

Heat oil in large sauté pan over medium heat. Add onion and cook until soft and translucent, stirring occasionally, 5-7 minutes. Add garlic and tomato paste and stir well. Add tomato puree, salt, red pepper flakes, vodka and mascarpone. Stir well to combine and reduce heat to simmer, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, bring large pot of water to a boil. Add a heaping pinch of kosher salt, then rigatoni. Cook according to package directions for al dente.

Using a spider, or large slotted spoon, bring rigatoni to sauce and stir, reserving pasta water. Add ½ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and ½ cup pasta water. Stir until completely incorporated into the sauce. Add salt and pepper to taste. Continue to stir and cook down 5-10 minutes. If sauce appears too thick, add more pasta water in ¼ cup increments until desired consistency. Top with more cheese and torn basil leaves. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil.

## *wine pairings*

I have a few pairings with this very versatile dish. For a wonderful Italian red wine, I recommend a Nebbiolo from the Piedmont. It's robust and earthy perfect for a rustic dish. California Merlot also pairs nicely with this rich, creamy sauce. Silky with medium acidity, it's bright, lush, elegantly smooth and earthy. If you enjoy white wine, a Sauvignon Blanc from California would be a wonderful pair with this dish. Bright and crisp with citrus undertones, it's refreshing acidity is a great contrast to the richness of the sauce making the dish feel lighter without compromising the rich, rustic flavors.